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VILLAGE BACKDROP:
VULGRUPH'S HOLLOW



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VILLAGE BACKDROP: VULGRUPH'S HOLLOW

The once prosperous village of Vulgruph's Hollow has become a den of murder and mistrust as what started as a series of odd animal mutilations has escalated into disappearances among the populace. Built on and across the mouth of a creek, even the stone walls and stoic guards of this dwarven village have done little to bring peace and security to its residents.

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CONTENTS

Vulgruph's Hollow At a Glance	2
Notable Locations	4
Life in Vulgruph's Hollow	6

STAT BLOCKS BY CR

CR		PAGE
4	Jingrasko Craigborn NG male half-orc bard (arcae duelist) 5	4
5	Dez'Riggen CE male derro rogue (spy) 3	6
6	Vosk Vulgruph LG male dwarf rogue (swashbuckler) 7	6

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VULGRUPH'S HOLLOW AT A GLANCE

The once prosperous village of Vulgruph's Hollow has become a den of murder and mistrust as what started as a series of odd animal mutilations has escalated into disappearances among the populace. Built on and across the mouth of a creek, even the stone walls and stoic guards of this dwarven village have done little to bring peace and security to its residents.

The people of Vulgruph's Hollow glare at one another through peepholes and shuttered windows as decades of racial tensions boil over in the wake of the tragedies sweeping through the village. Although Vulgruph's Hollow takes its name from the ingenious dwarven engineer who hollowed out the centre of the Snowcrest Creek using stone channels, its strategic position between two major roads has resulted in many travellers settling around the dwarven settlement. Impatient with the newcomers' lack of respect for dwarven tradition, the dwarves of Vulgruph's Hollow have done very little to make entire generations of humans and halflings feel welcome in the community. Divided by these tensions, the people of Vulgruph's Hollow are powerless to confront the many threats surrounding them, from the horrible giants who dwell in the northern hills to the mysterious kidnappings and vandalism that has plagued the village for nearly a year.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Ruler Vosk Vulgruph (NG dwarven rogue [swashbuckler] 7)

Government Council

Population 176 (41 humans, 108 dwarves, 10 gnomes, 1 half-orc, 15 halflings, 1 derro)

Alignments N, LG, LN, CN, NG

Languages Common, Dwarven, Halfling

Corruption +0; **Crime** -1 **Economy** -2; **Law** -5; **Lore** -2; **Society** +0

Qualities Insular, prosperous, strategic location

Danger +20; **Disadvantages** Hunted

NOTABLE FOLK

Most of the population are nothing more than hardworking peasants. A few, however, are of interest to adventurers:

Gnarlsey Hispitty Herdsmore (location 10; LN female gnome druid 5) The people of Vulgruph's Hollow rely on Gnarlsey for her druidic magic.

Hagren Bloodbeard IV (location 7; LN male dwarf expert 3) Hailing from a long line of entrepreneurs, Hagren owns most of the farms surrounding Vulgruph's Hollow.

Hethan Pagemaker (location 8; LN male human wizard 2) The most respected of Vulgruph's Hollow's non-dwarven citizens, Hethan is a retired mage turned book binder.

Jalina Bloodbeard (location 1; NG female dwarf sorcerer 3) Unusually charismatic for a dwarf, Jalina opened the Blood and Thunder Bistro after marrying her husband.

Jingrako Craighorn (location 2; NG male half-orc bard [arcane duelist] 5) Jingrako Craighorn settled in Vulgruph's Hollow as an innkeeper after his adventuring party was all but wiped out battling a local hill giant clan.

Regald Ditchfoot, aka "Dez'Riggen" (location 9; CE male derro rogue [spy] 3) The eccentric gravedigger of Vulgruph's Hollow has been impersonated by a derro who uses the dwarf's skin as a grizzly disguise.

Vosk Vulgruph (location 5; LG male dwarf rogue [swashbuckler] 7) The village leader was whisked away from a cosmopolitan life following his father's death. He is not happy.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

Most of the village comprises peasant homes. A few locations, however, are of interest to adventurers:

1. **Blood and Thunder Bistro:** This spacious stone restaurant features a massive chimney that constantly billows smoke laden with the delicious smell of cooking meats.
2. **Giant's Run Inn:** Founded by Jingrako, the Giant's Run is a favoured establishment of the village's non-dwarven residents.
3. **House of Ard'Sleityn:** This expertly constructed temple acts as a place of worship for all residents of Vulgruph's Hollow.
4. **Volspyr's Forge:** This expertly crafted dwarven forge is open for public and commissioned work.
5. **Vulgruph Manor:** The personal dwelling of Vosk Vulgruph is reportedly the oldest building in the hollow, hand-built by the village's founder himself.
6. **Vulgruph's Tears:** The canals was created using thick blocks of stone to route the Snowcrest Creek's waters around Vulgruph's Hollow.
7. **The Bloodbeard Ranches:** The Bloodbeard clan owns and operates the many livestock farms surrounding the village.
8. **Wellson's Place:** Located to the southeast of the village, this farm is the only one not owned by the Bloodbeard clan.
9. **Ancient's Rest:** Built at the foot of Mount Donisbeard, the dwarven residents are laid to rest in this mausoleum.
10. **The Fair Fields:** Named for the crops growing there, non-dwarven farmers dwell upon the Snowcrest Creek's banks.

MARKETPLACE

Resources & Industry Farming and smithing

Base Value 600 gp; **Purchase Limit** 3,750 gp; **Spellcasting** 3rd;
Minor Items 2d4; **Medium Items** 1d4; **Major Items** -

When the PCs arrive in Vulgruph's Hollow, the following items are for sale:

- **Armour** +1 chainmail (1,150 gp)
- **Scrolls (Arcane)** *shocking grasp* (25 gp)
- **Scroll (Divine)** *stone shape* (375 gp)
- **Weapons** +1 battleaxe (2,010 gp)

VILLAGE LORE

A PC making a Knowledge (geography) or Knowledge (local) may know some information about the village. A successful check reveals all the information revealed by a lesser check.

DC 10: Built upon the Snowcrest Creek, Vulgruph's Hollow acts both as a bridge and a crossroads between the Western Way and the Deep Road.

DC 15: Despite being a rather small village, Vulgruph's Hollow is a marvel of dwarven ingenuity, having been built within a mighty creek using slabs of stone to divert the water into two canals bounding the village.

DC 20: Although foreigners once flocked to Vulgruph's Hollow, racial tensions between the dwarves and their human and halfling peers have slowly festered; now neither group wishes to provide any support to the other.

VILLAGERS

Appearance The people of Vulgruph's Hollow maintain a cleaned, well-groomed appearance. Beards and facial hair are well-trimmed and clothes are washed often. Baths are taken regularly, but a healthy layer of dirt is a symbol of hard work.

Dress Clad in the sturdy, practical clothing, peasants typically adorn their clothes with glass beads and twine while richer folk use gold and silver embroidery.

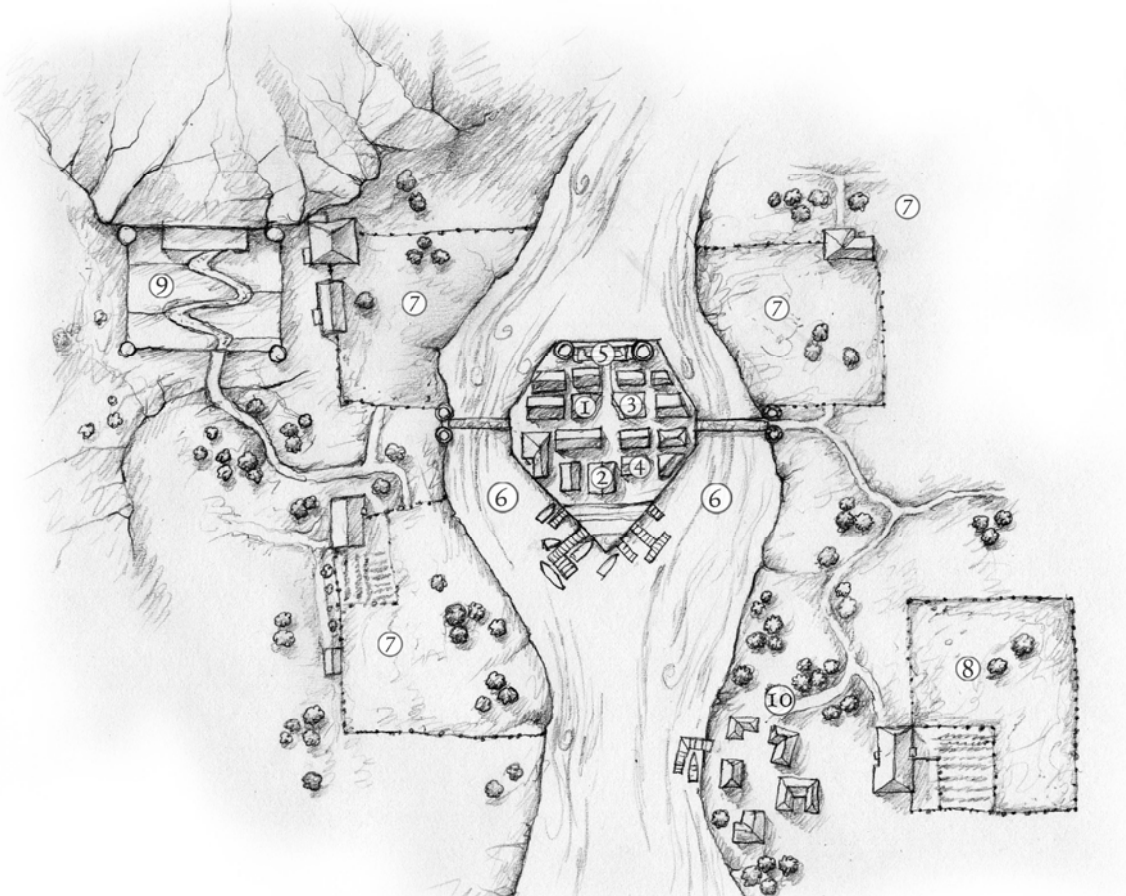
Nomenclature *male* Arneg, Feddrick, Hargred, Julion, Varegen; *female* Genge, Jarza, Ursula, Wilfern; *family* Earker, Kev, Plar, Strim.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

A PC can use Diplomacy to gather information about the village and its surroundings. This takes 1d4 hours and requires a DC 10 check. A character exceeding this check gains one additional rumour for each 5 points by which he exceeded DC 10. Use the table below to determine which rumour(s) the PC learns.

D6	RUMOUR
1	Cooks at the Blood and Thunder Bistro prepare meals with magic wands, resulting in an electrifying taste.
2	Regald Ditchfoot roams Ancient's Rest with his shovel on nights when no folk have died, muttering to himself.
3	Secret catacombs in Ancient's Rest lead deep into Mount Donisfeld
4	Vosk Vulgruph wants nothing to do with leading Vulgruph's Hollow.
5*	Outsiders settling on his lands made the spirit of Harsin Vulgruph restless and he has returned for vengeance.
6*	Jingrako Craighorn is mutilating dwarven livestock as an act of revenge for the dwarves' cruel acts towards him.

*False rumour



NOTABLE LOCATIONS

1: BLOOD AND THUNDER BISTRO

This spacious dwarven restaurant is built entirely from stone and features a massive chimney protruding from the centre of the building. A hearty cloud of smoke that smells of savoury, cooked meats crowns the building.

Run by Jalina Bloodbeard (NG female dwarf sorcerer 3), the Blood and Thunder is a favourite among dwarves and non-dwarves alike. Jalina reportedly serves only the finest crop from local farms and fills her kitchen both with her husband's meats and fine produce from the Wellson's farm. Unusually charismatic for a dwarf, Jalina invites all travellers into her restaurant without prejudice and is one of the few dwarves to employ non-dwarven labour. This practise leads many dwarves to call Jalina mad when not in earshot of her gruff, hot-tempered husband. That said, even Hagren might agree Jalina is too friendly for her own good, especially with the Wellson farmers with whom she maintains a fond friendship. Her signature dish is Jalina's Shock-Seared Sausage Links, which please the imbibers' tongue with an electric tingling sensation with every bite.

2: GIANT'S RUN INN

In stark contrast to the other buildings, the Giant's Rest Inn is built primarily from dark cherry wood beams flanking white-washed stone walls. The property is surrounded by cherry trees and small gardens landscaped with meticulous care.

Originally founded by Jingrasko Craighorn (NG half-orc bard [arcane duelist] 5) as the Legend Lore Inn, the local dwarves took to calling it the Giant's Run after the tale of Jingrasko's flight from a clan of hill giants that ambushed and slew most of his adventuring party came to light. Jingrasko's party was originally hired to investigate the strange mutilations when they first began nearly a year ago and after their defeat, Jingrasko settled in Vulgruph's Hollow. If one could call the dwarves of Vulgruph's Hollow subtle in their distaste for their human and halfling peers, they are outright hostile to Jingrasko because of his orc blood. Dwarves do not visit Jingrasko's inn. The half-orc manages to stay in business thanks to the patronage of the Wellsons. Stubbornness alone causes the dwarves of Vulgruph's Hollow to discount the quality of Jingrasko's ale.

3: HOUSE OF ARD'SLEITYN

Roughly translating to, "House of the Mountain Kings," in Dwarven, the House of Ard'Sleityn is the religious centre of Vulgruph's Hollow. Compared to the village's other buildings, the House is large and spacious, its central pillar reaching for the sun during the day and the stars at night. The pillar sports a window of thick, sturdy glass that allows celestial light to filter down into the temple. Outside of the House stand dozens of

poorly constructed shrines to the human and halfling gods. The deacons of the House refuse to allow worshippers of non-dwarven gods within its walls.

The House is a public place of worship. The temple's interior comprises a dozen small shrines to the various dwarven deities. Each shrine, even the ones kept exposed to the elements, is maintained by one of several deacons dwelling within the temple. Despite their presence, the temple has had no clerics stationed within since the previous holy men disappeared several months ago. He was the first of many missing people. For this reason, the House is scarcely visited even by the faithful, who whisper the building is scorned by the gods.

JINGRASKO CRAIGHORN

CR 4 (XP 1,200)

Male half-orc bard (arcane duelist) 5

NG Medium humanoid (human, orc)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +1, Sense Motive +1

Speed 30 ft.; **ACP** 0; Climb +5, Swim +5

AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 14; **CMD** 17

(+3 armour [mwk studded leather], +3 Dex, +1 shield [mwk buckler])

Fort +2, **Ref** +7, **Will** +4

hp 18 (5d8+5); orc ferocity

Orc Ferocity (Ex [1/day]) When brought below 0 hit points, Jingrasko can fight on for one more round as if disabled. At the end of his next turn, unless brought above 0 hit points, he falls unconscious and begins to die.

Space 5 ft.; **Base Atk** +3; **CMB** +4

Melee +1 rapier +7 (1d6+2/18-20) or

Melee mwk dagger +6 (1d4+1/19-20)

Atk Options Arcane Strike

Special Actions bardic performance (20 rds.; distraction, fascinate, inspire competence [+2], inspire courage [+2], rallying cry [+11])

Bard Spells Known (CL 5th; concentration +7 [+11 casting defensively or grappling]; arcane bond [+1 rapier])

2nd (3/day)—*gallant inspiration, heroism*

1st (5/day)—*cure light wounds, hideous laughter* (DC 13), *timely inspiration, vanish*

0—*detect magic, light, mage hand, mending, message, prestidigitation*

Abilities Str 12, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 11, Cha 14

SQ bardic knowledge (+2), weapon familiarity

Feats Arcane Strike^B, Combat Casting^B, Extra Performance, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse

Skills Acrobatics +10, Appraise +7, Bluff +7, Diplomacy +6, Intimidate +11, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +7, Knowledge (local) +9, Perform (sing) +10, Profession (innkeeper) +4, Spellcraft +7, Survival +5, Use Magic Device +6

Languages Common, Dwarven, Orc

Gear as above plus spell component pouch, belt pouch containing 2d4 gp and 1d6 sp; traveller's outfit.

4: VOLSPYR'S FORGE

Named for the noble dwarf who created it, Volspyr's Forge is entirely open to the public. According to urban legend, Ogin Volspyr once forged the finest steel in all of Vulgruph's Hollow. After he was found dead, presumably from slipping into a dark cave whose walls were slick from Snowcrest Falls, the matter of what to do with the heirless dwarf's forge was hotly contested until Vosk Vulgruph declared it belonged to the village and was therefore open for use by any citizen.

As a result, Volspyr's Forge is frequented by dwarves and non-dwarves alike, much to the former party's irritation. Instead of being a centre of pride in the dwarven craft, Volspyr's Forge is often used for training children and apprentices as well as producing cheap, crude products such as horseshoes and ploughs. Many dwarves would love to see the forge returned to its former glory as a place of dwarven art, but non-dwarves fear such a change would render them without a place to craft affordable tools that would otherwise be too expensive if sold by dwarven smiths.

5: VULGRUPH MANOR

A building that serves many purposes, Vulgruph Manor is the pride of the dwarves of Vulgruph's Hollow. It is a perfect example of expert craftsmanship and utility. Vulgruph Manor serves as the seat of power in Vulgruph Hollow, headquarters for the village's militia and Vosk Vulgruph's (LG male dwarf rogue [swashbuckler] 7) home. Vosk is the eldest son of the hollow's creator and founder. As a result, it is a hub of activity at all hours.

Despite his jaded outlook on his mayoral responsibilities, Vosk is well-connected and extremely well informed regarding local events. He is a vigilant opponent of Hagren Bloodbeard's attempts to claim the lands of Vulgruph Hollow's human settlers and works towards fair and equal compromises between dwarves and non-dwarves. Although some dwarves criticize Vosk for his cosmopolitan tastes, he is well-respected among the hollow's citizens as a wise and able leader.

6: VULGRUPH'S TEARS

The Snowcrest Creek flows from the tops of nearby Mount Donifsbeard and is split by two canals around the heart of Vulgruph's Hollow. Collectively, these canals are called Vulgruph's Tears and aside from creating a natural moat to aid the village's defences, the stone walls also act as an aqueduct, allowing water to flow from Snowcrest Creek and into dwarven homes via an intricate system of brass pipes. As a result, most of the dwarven homes have access to running water, a luxury few others in the region possess.

7: THE BLOODB Beard RANCHES

A series of livestock farms owned and managed by Hagren Bloodbeard (LN male dwarf expert 3), arguably the village's most successful patron, surround the village. Hagren hails from a long line of dwarven entrepreneurs. He made his fortune by purchasing the land that lay around the village and founding a many small livestock farms specializing in favoured dwarven animal products such as smoked meats and cheeses. Hagren's ranches were the first to suffer the strange mutilations and kidnappings that have been plaguing Vulgruph's Hollow. Bloodbeard is convinced his rivals among the Wellsons are to blame and has been lobbying to throw them out of the village, much to his wife's annoyance.

8: WELLSON'S PLACE

The Wellsons, a family of human farmers, purchased a small plot of land from Hagren Bloodbeard several decades ago and started a successful vegetable farm. Today, the Wellson ranch is the number one employer of human and halfling labour in the area and Hagren has grown increasingly jealous of the Wellson's success. In recent months, Hagren has accused the Wellsons of being the masterminds behind the mutilation of his livestock because of the interest one of the Wellsons' sons has in his ranch. Little does either family know the lad has taken a fancy to Hagren's daughter. The pair keep their forbidden relationship secret and only ever meet under the stars.

9: ANCIENT'S REST

This beautiful monument to the dwarven dead of Vulgruph's Hollow, it is said to have been built for Harsin Vulgruph himself. Gravedigger and groundskeeper Regald Ditchfoot, once maintained the monument. Regald has been long-since captured and tortured to death. His flayed skin now serves as the grizzly disguise for Dez'Riggen (CE male derro rogue [spy] 3). Dez'Riggen is a spy for his kin who dwell in a secluded village located underground in the shadow of Mount Donifsbeard. Having dug too high, the derro built a secret passage emerging in the depths of the mausoleum. They mutilate livestock and capture villagers as part of vile experiments designed to learn how to thrive in the sun without suffering excruciating pain. Dez'Riggen possesses the result of these experiments: a suit of surface flesh that must be maintained with a mixture of dwarven blood, animal hair, a human heart and halfling fingers.

10: THE FAIR FIELDS

Far to the south of Vulgruph's Hollow lies the Fair Fields, the miscellaneous homes and farms of the hollow's non-dwarven residents. Forbidden from settling in the village by law, the residents of the Fair Fields resent their treatment at the hands of the dwarves.

LIFE IN VULGRUPH'S HOLLOW

Life in Vulgruph's Hollow has been tumultuous for months as the gruesome animal mutilations have now escalated into missing people.

TRADE INDUSTRY

Before the disappearances, Vulgruph's Hollow was a bustling crossroads village specializing in the meats and cheeses that are synonymous with the dwarven palette as well as the quality dwarven smithing that one expects of a dwarven settlement. Now with much of the farmer's livestock mysteriously slaughtered and villagers disappearing trade has slowed to a trickle and money is quickly running thin.

LAW & ORDER

Needing very little incentive to follow traditional dwarven laws, Vulgruph's Hollow was a peaceful village where the local militia had very little work on their hands. Nowadays tensions are high as bad blood between the dwarven and non-dwarven villagers boils over in the form of heated accusations and threats of violence.

DEZ'RIGGEN CR 5 (XP 1,600)

Male derro rogue (spy) 3
 CE Small humanoid (derro)
Init +9; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +8, Sense Motive -4
Speed 20 ft.; **ACP** 0; Acrobatics +10 (+6 jumping), Stealth +18 (fast stealth)

AC 22, touch 16, flat-footed 17; **CMD** 20; +1 vs. traps (+4 armour [+1 studded leather], +5 Dex, +2 natural, +1 size)
Immune insanity, confusion; **Weakness** vulnerability to sunlight
Vulnerability to Sunlight (Ex) Dez'Riggen takes 1 Con damage after every hour he is exposed to sunlight.
Fort +7, **Ref** +9 (evasion), **Will** +8; **SR** 14
hp 66 (6 HD)

Space 5 ft.; **Base Atk** +4; **CMB** +5
Melee mwk short sword +11 (1d4+2/19-20)
Atk Options poison use, sneak attack (+3d6)
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 6th; concentration +10)
 At will—darkness, ghost sound (DC 13)
 1/day—daze (DC 13), sound burst (DC 15)
Combat Gear *potion of cure serious wounds*, *potion of invisibility*

Abilities Str 15, Dex 20, Con 20, Int 10, Wis 5, Cha 18
SQ madness, rogue talent (fast stealth), skilled liar (+1)
Feats Improved Initiative, Toughness, Weapon Finesse
Skills as above plus Bluff +13 (+14 to deceive), Intimidate +12, Linguistics +5
Languages Aklo, Common, Dwarven, Undercommon
Gear as above plus surface flesh disguise, 12 gp, 4 sp

EVENTS

While the PCs are in the village, one or more of the below events may occur. Choose or determine randomly:

D6	EVENT
1	Tensions have boiled over into an all-out lynch mob instigated against the humans or dwarves (determine randomly). The PCs are caught in the middle of it.
2	The PCs notice strange shadows dart from the Ancient's Rest, one towards the Bloodbeard farms and the other towards private homes in the Fair Fields.
3	A dwarven drunkard unsuccessfully use racial slurs to provoke Jingrasko into a brawl.
4	Hagren and Jalina Bloodbeard argue loudly in front of the Blood and Thunder Bistro. The wide-ranging argument covers the Wellson family and their merits to the village.
5	Either the Wellson boy or Bloodbeard lass (determine randomly) sneaks from home in the dead of night to the other family's ranch.
6	A kidnapping occurs on the PC's first night in Vulgruph's Hollow at the Giant's Run Inn; the only clue at the scene is a bloodied four-finger handprint.

VOSK VULGRUPH CR 6 (XP 2,400)

Male dwarf rogue (swashbuckler) 7
 LG Medium humanoid (dwarf)
Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., Perception +1 (+3 vs. unusual stonework; stonecunning), Sense Motive +11
Speed 20 ft.; **ACP** 0; Acrobatics +12, Climb +5, Escape Artist +9, Swim +5

AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 17; **CMD** 19 (23 vs. bull rush, +25 vs. trip); +4 dodge vs. giants, uncanny dodge (+5 armour [+2 studded leather], +2 Dex)
Fort +4 (+6 vs. poison), **Ref** +7 (evasion), **Will** +3 (+5 vs. fear); +2 vs. spells and spell-like abilities
hp 36 (7d8+14)

Space 5 ft.; **Base Atk** +5; **CMB** +7 (+9 trip)
Melee +1 spiked chain +8 (2d4+4)
Atk Options Combat Expertise, Improved Feint, Improved Trip, +1 vs. orcs and goblinoids, sneak attack (+4d6)
Special Actions offensive defensive (+4)

Abilities Str 14, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 10
SQ daring (+1)
Feats Combat Expertise, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (spiked chain), Improved Feint, Improved Trip^B, Weapon Finesse^B
Skills Appraise +9 (+11 vs. metal and gems), Bluff +10, Diplomacy +10, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (history) +9, Knowledge (local) +9, Knowledge (nobility) +9, Linguistics +6, Survival +6, Use Magic Device +7
Languages Common, Dwarven, Giant, Gnome, Halfling
Gear as above plus belt pouch containing 4d10 gp and 10d10 sp, noble's outfit

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